AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently Amended) A document categorizing method for categorizing a plurality of documents in an electronic system into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity, said method being characterized in that:

after categorizing said plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity, a cluster merging process is performed such that relations among clusters of said plurality of clusters are evaluated on the basis of documents included in the respective clusters, and two or more clusters having a degree of relation equal to or higher than a predetermined value are combined together;

wherein said cluster merging process defines said degree of relation between multiple clusters under consideration as the number of distinct files common to all of said clusters under consideration multiplied by a predefined multiplication factor divided by a total sum of all the files in said clusters under consideration.

2.   (Previously Presented) A document categorizing method according to Claim 1, wherein said multiplication factor is equal to the number of clusters under consideration.

3.   (Previously Presented) A document categorizing method according to Claim 1, wherein said cluster merging process is performed such that the manner in which feature elements, which characterize respective clusters under consideration as to whether they should be merged or not, appear in said respective clusters under consideration is examined, and cluster merging is performed in accordance with the manner in which the feature elements appear.

4.   (Previously Presented) A document categorizing method according to Claim 1, wherein said cluster merging process is performed on at least two clusters, and after completion of said cluster merging process a first time, said cluster

merging process is repeatedly performed on the resultant set of clusters until no further cluster merging occurs.

5. (Previously Presented) A document categorizing method according to Claim 1, wherein after completion of said cluster merging process, supplementary information indicating that cluster merging has been performed and also indicating the basis on which the cluster merging has been performed is output.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) A document categorizing method for categorizing a plurality of documents in an electronic system into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity, said method being characterized in that:

after categorizing said plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity, a cluster merging process is performed such that relations among clusters of said plurality of clusters are evaluated on the basis of documents included in the respective clusters, and two or more clusters having a degree of relation equal to or higher than a first predetermined value are combined together;

wherein the cluster names of respective clusters merged together are displayed such that when said degree of relation among said clusters is higher than a second predetermined value higher than said first predetermined value, said cluster names are displayed in a first listing format, and when said degree of relation among said clusters is lower than said second predetermined value and higher than said first predetermined value, said cluster names are displayed in a second listing format.

8. (Previously Presented) A document categorizing method according to Claim 7, wherein when said cluster names are displayed in said first listing format, said cluster names of the respective clusters are displayed successively in a single horizontal line or are displayed successively in different lines, and when said cluster names are displayed in said second listing format, a delimiter is inserted between adjacent cluster names of the respective clusters.

9.   (Previously Presented) A document categorizing method according to Claim 7, wherein when a first cluster includes a second cluster therein, the name of said second cluster included in said first cluster is enclosed within brackets and placed after the name of said first cluster.

10. (Previously Presented) A document categorizing apparatus for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity, said apparatus comprising:

      a clustering unit for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters in accordance with semantic similarity; and

      a cluster merging unit for evaluating the relation among the plurality of clusters created by said clustering unit on the basis of the documents included in the respective clusters and then combines two or more clusters having a degree of relation equal to or higher than a predetermined value;

      wherein said cluster merging unit defines said degree of relation between multiple clusters under consideration as the number of distinct files common to all of said clusters under consideration multiplied by a predefined multiplication factor divided by a total sum of all the files in said clusters under consideration.

11. (Previously Presented) A document categorizing apparatus for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity, said apparatus comprising:

      a clustering unit for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters in accordance with semantic similarity,

      a cluster merging unit for evaluating the relation among the plurality of clusters created by said clustering unit on the basis of the documents included in the respective clusters and then combines two or more clusters having a degree of relation equal to or higher than a first predetermined value;

      an output display for displaying the cluster names of respective clusters merged together such that when said degree of relation among said clusters is higher than a second predetermined value higher than said first predetermined value, said cluster names are displayed in a first listing format, and when said

degree of relation among said clusters is lower than said second predetermined value and higher than said first predetermined value, said cluster names are displayed in a second listing format.

12. (Previously Presented) A storage medium on which a document categorizing program for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity is stored, said document categorizing program comprising:

a clustering step for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters in accordance with semantic similarity, and

a cluster merging step in which the degrees of relation among clusters of said plurality of clusters obtained in said clustering step are evaluated on the basis of documents included in the respective clusters, and two or more clusters having a degree of relation equal to or higher than a predetermined value are combined together;

wherein said cluster merging step defines said degree of relation between multiple clusters under consideration as the number of distinct files common to all of said clusters under consideration multiplied by a predefined multiplication factor divided by a total sum of all the files in said clusters under consideration.

13. (Previously Presented) A storage medium on which a document categorizing program for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters according to semantic similarity is stored, said document categorizing program comprising:

a clustering step for categorizing a plurality of documents into a plurality of clusters in accordance with semantic similarity;

a cluster merging step in which the degrees of relation among clusters of said plurality of clusters obtained in said clustering step are evaluated on the basis of documents included in the respective clusters, and two or more clusters having a degree of relation equal to or higher than a first predetermined value are combined together; and

a step for outputting said cluster-merging-process information, wherein the cluster names of respective clusters merged together are displayed such that when said degree of relation among said clusters is higher than a second predetermined value higher than said first predetermined value, said cluster names are displayed in a first listing format, and when said degree of relation among said clusters is lower than said second predetermined value and higher than said first predetermined value, said cluster names are displayed in a second listing format.

14. (Previously Presented) The document categorizing method of Claim 1, wherein said multiplication factor and said number of clusters under consideration is two.

15. ((Previously Presented) The document categorizing method of Claim 7, wherein said first listing format is an AND listing format and said second listing format is an OR listing format.

16. (Previously Presented) The document categorizing apparatus of claim 10, wherein said multiplication factor is equal to the number of clusters under consideration.

17. (Previously Presented) The document categorizing apparatus of Claim 10, wherein said multiplication factor and said number of clusters under consideration is two.

18. (Previously Presented) The storage medium of Claim 12, wherein said multiplication factor is equal to the number of clusters under consideration.

19. (Previously Presented) The storage medium of Claim 12, wherein said multiplication factor and said number of clusters under consideration is two.

20. (Previously Presented) The document categorizing apparatus of claim 11, wherein said first listing format is an AND listing format and said second listing format is an OR listing format.

21. (Previously Presented) The document categorizing apparatus of claim 11, wherein when said cluster names are displayed in said first listing format, said cluster names of the respective clusters are displayed successively in a single horizontal line or are displayed successively in different lines, and when said cluster names are displayed in said second listing format, a delimiter is inserted between adjacent cluster names of the respective clusters.

22. (Previously Presented) The storage medium of claim 13, wherein said first listing format is an AND listing format and said second listing format is an OR listing format.

23. (Previously Presented) The storage medium of claim 13, wherein when said cluster names are displayed in said first listing format, said cluster names of the respective clusters are displayed successively in a single horizontal line or are displayed successively in different lines, and when said cluster names are displayed in said second listing format, a delimiter is inserted between adjacent cluster names of the respective clusters.